



Rodel Foundation ALL A's Fall Dinner

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Tuesday, October 19, 2010

Thank you, Carol! And a special thanks for your tireless work leading the P-20 Coordinating Council. I don't have to convince anyone in this audience of your passion and dedication to education and to our state.

As I look around the room, I can't help but notice that I'm here with some of the most prominent leaders in education.

Our state and our students are so blessed to have you.

Now, I would like to take a moment to assure you of my commitment to raising the expectations and results for education in our state. I believe that every student deserves a great teacher and a great school.

But ... I'm sure you've never heard that before from an elected official!

So let me be more specific, so you know I truly mean it.

Three weeks ago, I spoke to the P-20 Council and reminded them that we didn't quit when our Round 1 Race to the Top application was unsuccessful.

And, we won't quit now.

With our Round 2 application, we now have -- for the first time in our state -- a comprehensive and aggressive education reform plan that reaches every student in every classroom, from preschool to college ...

-- An education reform plan that recognizes and appreciates the diversity of our students' backgrounds -- as well as the different types of schools they attend, in a state where charter schools and online schools now outnumber district schools ...

-- An education reform plan with specific strategies designed to close student achievement gaps that have been allowed to continue for far too long ...

For the very first time we have an education reform plan with a shared vision and agreed upon goals -- specific goals like:

- Expecting 93 percent of high schoolers to graduate,
- Expecting 94 percent of third graders to meet state standards in reading, and
- Expecting twice as many college students to complete their studies and receive a four year degree.

Thanks to the work of many, including many of you here, we have a reform plan that helps our public education system improve the prospects not just of our students but of Arizona's economy, with support from educators, business leaders and community organizations across the state ...

Now THAT'S a valuable asset!

And we were so close to receiving funding---finishing better than any other Western state. I hope our friends in Washington will someday realize that there is more than just one state west of the Mississippi! There are 24!

Well, true to form, we're not waiting for Washington to get the job done in Arizona!

The good news is that most of the big initiatives have already begun.

- The new standards have been adopted to ensure students are being held to achievement expectations of their peers around the nation and the world ...
- The new tests are being developed to make sure we have fair and timely assessments of student progress ...
- The persistently low achieving schools have been identified so we know who needs the most help ..
- And, the new teacher and principal evaluation systems are under construction so that we have a way to reward those who aren't just passionate about teaching but who make real differences in student achievement

But many other parts of the plan are just as critical and should not wait.

Probably the greatest example is our need for strong data systems.

We need solid information to be able to measure ourselves at the state, local and classroom level to figure out if we're making progress.

We need reliable data systems in order to make better decisions about WHAT's working well and WHO's working well in the classroom.

Another example is training. We know these new standards, tests, data systems, and evaluations will only be successful if teachers and principals are given the opportunity to learn how to use them to improve instruction.

And certainly, making all of this information accessible to parents is very important to me.

Of course, the lack of funding will make it more challenging to move ahead as quickly as we would like on all fronts.

But to those who say we can't afford the reforms, I say, what we can't afford is to keep paying for what does not work!

We will move ahead.

To make sure that this strategic asset, our reform plan, does not become another good idea sitting on a government shelf, I've asked the P-20 Council, under Carol's leadership, to work with Dr. Paul Koehler and the WEST Ed team, to turn our state's reform plan into our state's "to do" list, in order of priority so that we can move ahead on implementation.

As part of that effort, I also have asked the Council to consider where we might re-prioritize and re-deploy existing resources at the state and local levels to pursue these reforms.

Well, I know my time to speak with you here tonight is short -- but you can be assured that you will be hearing more about this in the days to come as we move forward TOGETHER on a program for education reform and excellence in Arizona.

Certainly one of the keys to our success will be partnerships with successful organizations like the Rodel Foundation.

Commitment to education and student achievement is something that defines the Rodel Foundation and Don Budinger.

The amount of work they have been able to accomplish in such a short amount of time is nothing short of amazing.

In ten short years they have started and implemented three successful initiatives.

First, to create a pool of highly capable teachers to work in high-need and rural schools.

Second, to create a pool of aspiring administrators trained by great principals to work in high need schools.

Third, to create the Math Achievement Club.

Tonight, it is my honor to recognize the Rodel Foundation for huge math achievement gains made in 10 counties by over thirty-nine thousand students in the MAC-Ro Math Program.

I'd like to ask Rodel founder Don Budinger and President & CEO Dr. Carol Peck to come forward to receive my proclamation highlighting that achievement and the designation of October as Math Achievement Month.

Thank you.